



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**Dale J Schmidt** Sheriff   **Scott Smith** Chief Deputy

## Help Prevent Threats at School

In the last couple of weeks law enforcement has had to investigate threats taking place in Dodge County schools that are not only disturbing, but frightening to students, parents, teachers and the public. I give a great deal of credit to the officers and deputies involved with investigating these incidents and the speed in which they were able to resolve them to ensure the safety of our schools.

As these incidents continue to occur across the United States with troubled individuals carrying out acts of violence in our schools, I would like to encourage our community to be proactive in addressing these issues before they become threats or actual acts of violence.

Education is always a key component in being proactive and preventing these dangerous incidents from occurring. That education needs to come from our educators, law enforcement, social workers and most importantly parents. While I am certain that there are individuals in each of these groups who are taking proactive approaches toward prevention, there is still room for improvement. Therefore, I am asking everyone to step up that educational approach.

Parents, please take the time to sit down with your child and explain to them the dangers and repercussions of making threats. Our recent investigations have led us to believe that bullying has spurred this behavior. While bullying is certainly not acceptable and is difficult for children to cope with, we need to teach our children to find productive and appropriate methods of reacting to bullying. No parent wants their child to be bullied. On the other hand, no parent wants to see their child make threats or carry out acts of violence. If we simply take time to talk with your children and provide them with alternatives and options in dealing with these types of situations we can work to minimize threats and keep our children safe.

Beyond keeping our schools safe, it is also important to instill in our children the reality that there will be difficult times in their lives. They need to learn how to cope with those situations without resorting to threats or violence. Our children need to understand that there are alternatives to violence, even when disrespected by another person.

This is also a great time to educate children that actions have consequences. So what are the consequences for making a threat on the safety of individuals at school? Of course there is the potential for legal sanctions ranging from citations for disorderly conduct up to potential felony criminal charges. Beyond the legal consequences are educational sanctions that a student may face. Certainly school districts must take threats seriously as the safety of students has to be their number one concern. While I cannot speak for school boards, in my experience most of these incidents are considered to be grounds for serious suspension or expulsion from school. From conversations I've had with school district officials, it is very difficult to get into other schools to finish education after an expulsion. This not only affects them in the short term but also in the long-term as it is very difficult to find desirable careers without basic education.

We need to all work together and do our part to ensure the safety of our children. Have that conversation with your child and stay involved in their lives. Of course even the most involved parents miss things from time to time but by staying involved and having those crucial conversations we can help to keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work, visit and go to school.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt